Joshua B. Swigart, Esq. (SBN: 225557) 1 FILED josh@westcoastlitigation.com 2 Robert L. Hyde, Esq. (SBN: 227183) 08 FEB 27 PM 4: 06 bob@westcoastlitigation.com 3 **HYDE & SWIGART** CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT BOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORMA 4 411 Camino Del Rio South, Suite 301 San Diego, CA 92108-3551 DEPUTY 5 ay: Telephone: (619) 233-7770 6 Facsimile: (619) 297-1022 7 Attorneys for Plaintiff 8 Shirley R. Fleming 9 10 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT** 11 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 12 Case No.: '08 CV 0371 BLM 13 SHIRLEY R. FLEMING. 14 **COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES** Plaintiff. 15 JURY TRIAL DEMANDED 16 v. 17 **BRANCHFELD & ASSOCIATES**

....

Defendant.

1. The United States Congress has found abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors, and has determined that abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy. Congress wrote the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq (hereinafter "FDCPA"), to eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors, to insure that

INTRODUCTION





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¹ 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(a)-(e) ² Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1788.1 (a)-(b) ³ 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(a)-(e)

- those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses.¹
- 2. The California legislature has determined that the banking and credit system and grantors of credit to consumers are dependent upon the collection of just and owing debts and that unfair or deceptive collection practices undermine the public confidence that is essential to the continued functioning of the banking and credit system and sound extensions of credit to consumers. The Legislature has further determined that there is a need to ensure that debt collectors exercise this responsibility with fairness, honesty and due regard for the debtor's rights and that debt collectors must be prohibited from engaging in unfair or deceptive acts or practices.²
- 3. The United States Congress has found abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors, and has determined that abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy. Congress wrote the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq (hereinafter "FDCPA"), to eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors, to insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses.³
- 4. The California legislature has determined that the banking and credit system and grantors of credit to consumers are dependent upon the collection of just and owing debts and that unfair or deceptive collection practices undermine

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- the public confidence that is essential to the continued functioning of the banking and credit system and sound extensions of credit to consumers. The Legislature has further determined that there is a need to ensure that debt collectors exercise this responsibility with fairness, honesty and due regard for the debtor's rights and that debt collectors must be prohibited from engaging in unfair or deceptive acts or practices.⁴
- 5. SHIRLEY R. FLEMING, ("Plaintiff"), by Plaintiff's attorneys, brings this action to challenge the actions of BRANCHFELD & ASSOCIATES P.C., ("Defendant"), with regard to attempts by Defendant, a debt collector, to unlawfully and abusively collect a debt allegedly owed by Plaintiff, and this conduct caused Plaintiff damages.
- 6. Unless otherwise indicated, these allegations are made on information and belief. Further, the use of any defendant's name in this Complaint includes all agents, employees, officers, members, directors, heirs, successors, assigns, principals, trustees, sureties, subrogees, representatives and insurers of that defendant named. All allegations are made on information and belief, except those allegations that pertain to the named Plaintiff(s), or to their attorneys, which are alleged on personal knowledge.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 7. Jurisdiction of this Court arises pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(d), and 28 U.S.C. § 1367 for supplemental state law claims.
- 8. This action arises out of Defendant's violations of the following: the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, California Civil Code §§ 1788-1788.32 (RFDCPA), the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 et seq..

⁴ Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1788.1 (a)-(b)

- 9. Because Defendant does business within the State of California, personal jurisdiction is established.
- 10. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391.

PARTIES

- 11. Plaintiff is a natural person who resides in the City of Fallbrook, County of San Diego, State of California and is obligated or allegedly obligated to pay a debt, and is a "consumer" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3).
- 12. Plaintiff is a natural person from whom a debt collector sought to collect a consumer debt which was due and owing or alleged to be due and owing from Plaintiff, and is a "debtor" as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(h).
- 13. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that Defendant is a company operating from the City of Torrance, County of Los Angeles, State of California.
- 14. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that Defendant is a person who uses an instrumentality of interstate commerce or the mails in a business the principal purpose of which is the collection of debts, or who regularly collects or attempts to collect, directly or indirectly, debts owed or due or asserted to be owed or due another and is therefore a "debt collector" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).
- 15. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that Defendant, in the ordinary course of business, regularly, on behalf of himself or herself or others, engages in debt collection as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(b), and is therefore a "debt collector" as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(c).
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16. This case involves money, property or their equivalent, due or owing or alleged to be due or owing from a natural person by reason of a consumer credit transaction. As such, this action arises out of a "consumer debt" and "consumer credit" as those terms are defined by Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.2(f).

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 17. At all times relevant, Plaintiff was an individual residing within the State of California.
- 18. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that at all times relevant Defendant conducted business in the State of California.
- 19. Sometime before October 11, 2007, Plaintiff allegedly incurred financial obligations to Capital One that were money, property, or their equivalent, which is due or owing, or alleged to be due or owing, from a natural person to another person and were therefore "debt(s)" as that term is defined by California Civil Code §1788.2(d), and a "consumer debt" as that term is defined by California Civil Code §1788.2(f).
- 16 20. These financial obligations were primarily for personal, family or household purposes and are therefore "debt(s)" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(5).
- 21. Sometime thereafter, but before October 11, 2007, Plaintiff allegedly fell behind in the payments allegedly owed on the alleged debt. Plaintiff currently takes no position as to whether or not this alleged debt was actually owed.
- 22 Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that subsequently, but before October 11, 2007, the alleged debt was assigned, placed, or otherwise transferred, to Defendant for collection.
- 25 23. On or about October 11, 2007, Defendant sent Plaintiff a written communication demanding \$2,859.79. In actuality, Plaintiff did not owe close to this amount demanded, as evidenced by the fact that Defendant

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- subsequently filed a lawsuit on behalf of Capital One on the same account claiming Capital One only had a legal right to recover \$1,233.94.
- 24. By demanding an amount Defendant was not legally entitled to, Defendant falsely represented the legal status and amount of the alleged debt in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2)(A), 1692e(1), and 1692f.
- 25. Because this communication did not comply with certain provisions of the FDCPA, including, but not limited to, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2)(A), 1692e(1), and 1692f, this communication also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 26. On October 11, 2007 Plaintiff sent a letter to Defendant in which Plaintiff advised Defendant that Plaintiff wished Defendant to cease further communication with the Plaintiff in a manner consistent with the requirements pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(c).
- 14 27. On October 15, 2007, Defendant received Plaintiff's letter requesting Defendant cease communicating with Plaintiff. 15
 - 28. On October 19, 2007 Defendant telephoned Plaintiff attempting to collect on the alleged debt after Plaintiff sent and Defendant received a written request to cease communications associated with the collection of the alleged debt. Plaintiff again, informed Defendant to cease communications.
 - 29. By sending the above communication after Defendant was notified in writing that Defendant was to cease further communication with the Plaintiff in a manner consistent with the requirements in 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(c), Defendant violated in 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(c) and 15 U.S.C. § 1692f.
- 30. Because this communication did not comply with certain provisions of the 24 25 FDCPA, including, but not limited to, 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(c) and 15 U.S.C. § 26 1692f, this communication also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 31. On October 26, 2007 Defendant again telephoned Plaintiff attempting to 27 28 collect on the alleged debt after Plaintiff sent and Defendant received a written

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reque	est to	cease co	mmu	nications as	ssociated wi	th the	coll	ection of th	ne a	lleged
debt	and	Plaintiff	had	instructed	Defendant	over	the	telephone	to	cease
comr	nunic	cations								

- 2. By sending the above communication after Defendant was notified in writing that Defendant was to cease further communication with the Plaintiff in a manner consistent with the requirements in 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(c), Defendant violated in 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(c) and 15 U.S.C. § 1692f.
- 3. Because this communication did not comply with certain provisions of the FDCPA, including, but not limited to, 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(c) and 15 U.S.C. § 1692f, this communication also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 4. On December 27, 2007, Defendant caused to be filed in Superior Court a complaint for breach of contract and common counts on behalf of Capital One Bank. Defendant failed to conduct any investigation into the facts of the claim, as Plaintiff's last date of payment was March of 2001. With any investigation, Defendant should have realized that the statute of limitations had run on the account and Defendant had not legal authority to bring the action.
- 5. By filing this frivolous action, Defendant used false, deceptive, or misleading means in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e and 1692e(10), as well as Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17 et. seq.
- 36. This resulting illegal action caused Plaintiff damages.

CAUSES OF ACTION CLAIMED BY PLAINTIFF

COUNT I

VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT 15 U.S.C. § 1692 ET SEQ.

37. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully stated herein.

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- 38. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the FDCPA, including but not limited to each and every one of the abovecited provisions of the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq.
- 39. As a result of each and every violation of the FDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to any actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1); statutory damages in an amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A); and, reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) from each Defendant.

COUNT II

VIOLATION OF THE ROSENTHAL FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1788-1788.32 (RFDCPA)

- 40. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully stated herein.
- 41. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the RFDCPA.
- 42. As a result of each and every violation of the RFDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to any actual damages pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(a); statutory damages for a knowing or willful violation in the amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b); and reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(c) from each Defendant.

COUNT I

VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT 15 U.S.C. § 1692 ET SEQ.

- 43. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully stated herein.
- 44. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the FDCPA, including but not limited to each and every one of the abovecited provisions of the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq.

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45.	As a result of each and every violation of the FDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to
	any actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1); statutory damages in
	an amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A); and,
	reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) from
	each Defendant.

COUNT II

VIOLATION OF THE ROSENTHAL FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1788-1788.32 (RFDCPA)

- 46. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully stated herein.
- 47. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the RFDCPA.
- 48. As a result of each and every violation of the RFDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to any actual damages pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(a); statutory damages for a knowing or willful violation in the amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b); and reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(c) from each Defendant.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that judgment be entered against Defendant for:

FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

- an award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A);
- an award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3).

ROSENTHAL FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

 an award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00, pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b); an award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to

FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

- an award of actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1) in an amount to be adduced at trial, from Defendant;
- an award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §
- an award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to

ROSENTHAL FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

- an award of actual damages pursuant to California Civil Code § 1788.30(a) in an amount to be adduced at trial, from Defendant;
- an award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00, pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code
- an award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to

49. Pursuant to the seventh amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, Plaintiff is entitled to, and demands, a trial by jury.

> Respectfully submitted, HYDE & SWIGART

By:

Joshua B. Swigart, Esq. Attorney for Plaintiff

JURY DEMAND: TYPES INO

SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

JUDGE

UNDER f.r.c.p. 23

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY (See Instructions):

DATE 02/25/2008

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO DIVISION

148145 - SH * * C O P Y * * February 27, 2008 16:15:37

Civ Fil Non-Pris

USAO #.: 08CV0371

Judge..: NAPOLEON A JONES, JR

\$350.00 CK Amount.:

Check#.: BC2311

Total-> \$350.00

FROM: FLEMING V. BRANCHFELD AND ASSO